Buddhist Philosophy and Its Influence on Contemporary Educational Practices: A Critical Appraisal

Summary of the Work

Thesis submitted for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Education

By

Tapas Kr Patra

Department of Education

Swami Vivekananda University

Barrackpore, Kolkata 700121

West Bengal, India

2025

The study critically examines the enduring relevance of Buddhist thought in shaping modern educational theories, values, and pedagogical approaches. Rooted in principles of compassion, mindfulness, self-discipline, and the pursuit of wisdom, Buddhist philosophy offers a holistic vision of education that extends beyond mere academic achievement toward the cultivation of moral character, inner awareness, and social responsibility. The research highlights how Buddhist notions of interdependence, impermanence, and the middle path can inspire balanced educational models that address intellectual, emotional, and ethical dimensions of learners.

One significant contribution of Buddhist philosophy to education is the emphasis on mindfulness and meditation as tools for enhancing concentration, reducing stress, and fostering emotional regulation. These practices, increasingly integrated into contemporary classrooms, promote well-being, resilience, and deeper engagement with learning. The study also underscores the role of compassion and altruism in education, suggesting that nurturing empathy among students can counteract competitiveness and individualism, thereby fostering cooperative learning communities. Furthermore, Buddhist ethics emphasize non-violence, respect for diversity, and harmonious coexistence, values that resonate strongly with global citizenship education and peace education frameworks.

At the same time, the study critically appraises potential limitations in directly transplanting Buddhist practices into secular educational contexts. Concerns include cultural appropriation, the risk of decontextualizing spiritual practices, and challenges in adapting religiously rooted concepts within pluralistic and multicultural societies. The research argues for a careful, context-sensitive integration that respects both the integrity of Buddhist traditions and the diverse needs of modern learners.

Ultimately, the study concludes that while Buddhist philosophy should not be viewed as a comprehensive solution to educational challenges, it offers valuable insights for cultivating holistic human development. By integrating mindfulness, ethical awareness, and compassionate pedagogy, contemporary education can move closer to realizing its broader aims of nurturing balanced individuals who contribute positively to society. The critical appraisal therefore emphasizes both the promise and the need for caution, suggesting that Buddhist-inspired practices can enrich education when thoughtfully adapted, without compromising inclusivity, cultural sensitivity, or the secular nature of modern schooling.